

DECONSTRUCTING BOUNDARIES AND MEANING WITHIN/ACROSS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

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Abstract

Meaning 'has territory ... and contested boundaries' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.93), which can be created, lost, and recreated. Drawing on this notion of meaning, I undertake three readings to explore the meaning of professional learning in police education, with reference to research from my doctoral thesis. I grapple with and negotiate boundaries within each reading and across the three readings. The first reading constructs the current 'paradigm shift'. In the second reading I challenge and deconstruct my first reading, revealing artifice, ignorance, and nostalgia as contributing to the metaphysics of presence. The third reading unfreezes and remobilises meaning through the interdependent notion of 'certain uncertainty'. These concepts 'lean' on each other so that meaning is made between rather than within the words.

Keywords: deconstruction, meaning, professional learning.

Preamble

My efforts at a deconstructive reading of the concept of professional learning are influenced by my doctoral thesis, which centres on one police jurisdiction henceforth referred to as 'the Agency'. In addition to my role as a student researcher and novice deconstructive reader, I am an outsider-insider in the Agency. Daily, I simultaneously work within and against the prevailing 'D/discourses' (Gee, 2005, p.7) (words, tools, symbols) and dominant subcultures. As an outsider-insider, I need to be 'able and willing to question organizational assumptions...' (Klein, 2004, p.176). I have deliberately acted to critically reflect upon and develop an understanding of the cultural, organisational and individual assumptions, and practices that challenge my professional and personal values. I question what is taken for granted whilst working with the opportunities *and* constraints of the culture (Klein, 2004). One significant action has been postgraduate study and research, and my desire to deconstruct conceptions of learning.

My thesis is a 'radical hermeneutic' (Caputo, 2000, p.3; Fairfield, 2011, p.2) study of narratives of learning from experience and learning to learn as they contribute to the development of police officers' professional practice, subjectivities, and professional learning. Postmodern or radical hermeneutics, with its deconstructive bent, eschews the metaphysical and, instead, aims 'to keep the play of language in play' (Fairfield, 2011, p.196). 'Deconstruction' involves 'the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification ...' (Derrida, 1981, p.xiv) and is therefore a necessary element to 'reading the relations and shifts in meaning' and a remobilising meaning in a way that opens up the narratives to 'more comprehensive and less complicitous formulations' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.85). At the heart of Derrida's concerns were the boundaries that 'essences' such as 'truth or being ... of tradition or community' created and the impact of the essences on the Other who is 'outside' or beyond those boundaries (Caputo, 2000, p.57).

Introduction

This paper is about keeping language in play and deconstructing and remobilising the outside or what is beyond those boundaries. Inspiration is drawn from Stronach and Maclure's (1997, p.86) efforts applying a postmodern reading to 'the educational discourse of vocationalism'.

I offer three different readings of professional learning within the context of police education within the Agency. My purpose is to explore the meaning/s within and across the territory/ies and boundaries of professional learning. The first reading is of the *paradigm shift*, which is caught in the metaphysics of presence. The second reading exposes the 'cinders' (or 'the trace'): things that simultaneously 'erase [themselves] totally, radically, while presenting [themselves]' (Derrida, 1987, p.1). This reading deconstructs the 'paradigm shift', revealing artifice, ignorance, and nostalgia as contributing to the metaphysics of presence. The third reading unfreezes meaning in order to move and shift the meaning of professional learning, opening it up to the Other.

The mobilisation of meaning, or keeping meaning in a state of 'flux' or transformation, is an integral feature of postmodernism (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.94). The notion of *paradigm shift* as it relates to professional learning represents a 'postmodern space' with notions of 'postmodern time' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.87) wherein transformation is an ingredient of meaning, revealing how meaning is made and remade.

The First Reading: the 'paradigm shift'

Derrida advises us to begin *wherever* we are, in the middle of the fix we find ourselves in, in the middle of a text ... with the smallest bit or piece. That at least will enable [us] to get started, not at the beginning, which is to ask too much, but wherever [we are] (Caputo, 1997, p.21, emphasis in original)

The beginning is where we are in the early stages of a *paradigm shift* in the Agency. It represents a shift from an essentially doctrinal intent and approach to education to one of learning with educative approaches and intent (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004; Ryan, 2008a, 2008b). The concept and practices of professional learning are at the centre of this paradigm shift. In the Agency, the predominant conception – purpose and outcome – of professional learning reflects what Doyle (cited in Timperley, 2011, p.8) describes as developing a 'good employee prepared to maintain the prevailing norms ... [and] practices' of the occupation and the Agency. Producing 'technicians' who will comply with what they are told to think and do (Doyle, cited in Timperley, 2011, p.8). This is in direct contrast to a different approach to professional learning that produces a 'reflective professional able to draw on an integrated knowledge base to improve practice...' (Doyle, cited in Timperley, 2011, p.8).

Research distinguishes professional development from professional learning. Professional development is prescriptive, imposed, and "delivered" (i.e., passive process of 'sit and get') (Ball, 2003; Timperley, 2011; Timperley, Parr & Bertanees, 2009). In contrast, professional learning is an active process working within the nexus between developing the individual practitioner's identity and the outcomes of their practice (Collinson et al, 2009; Hunzicker, 2010; Opfer & Pedder, 2011; Timperley, 2011). This intent underscores strategies of the paradigm shift in the Agency.

A whole of Agency learning pathway – formal and informal professional learning – has been implemented over the past four years. The formal pathway incorporates a range of 'promotion programs' for those officers seeking promotion within the Agency. The new curricula for these programs incorporate higher education and stage the learning: starting with the individual and self-awareness; then to the people, leadership, and human resource management; and finally to the "business" and command and control or incident management. The informal components involve

facilitated workshops for all police officers and state service employees.

These workshops encourage and enable conversations in open, honest, safe group work environments. The lead facilitator is internationally accredited. There are a number of aims, but essentially the workshops aim to enhance self-awareness, exposing participants' to alternative or different (i.e., democratic, inclusive, collaborative as opposed to autocratic) ways of thinking and working with others. Feedback reveals enthusiastic response to, and acceptance of, the different approach to professional learning. However, there is acknowledgement and a degree of disappointment expressed at the residue of "traditional" thinking and practices in some workplaces within the Agency. A snapshot of the 'field' (Bourdieu, cited in Jenkins, 2002, p.85) adds further texture to the fabric of the Agency and the impetus for the *paradigm shift*.

The Field

The 'field' defines the 'discourse-practice' (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.1) framework of policing that represents a complex set of 'power-knowledge relations' (Foucault, 1978, cited in Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p.292), the sources of which are the prevailing D/discourses and dominant subcultures identified in my Master's thesis. I draw on Bourdieu's (cited in Jenkins, 2002, p.85) conceptions of capital. The source of the truths inherent in the 'cultural' capital ('knowledge' and truth) is the *Warrior* D/discourse and the *command and control* and "*real*" *police work* subcultures (Ryan 2008a, pp.9-11; 2008b, p.40). These emphasise policing as an essentially masculine occupation and establish gender and the body as capital (Foucault, 1977; Westmarland, 2001). The emphasis therefore is on physical strength, power, authority, compliance, and acting and doing, rather than thinking and feeling.

Underscoring the 'symbolic' capital (status and respect) are characteristics of the *Perfect self* D/discourse (Ryan, 2008a, pp.13-14; 2008b, p.41) and *family-relationships* and "*real*" *police work* subcultures (Ryan, 2008a, pp.6-8; 2008b, p.41). Image, reputation, discipline, the need to be perfect, an elitist, police 'know best' (Adlam, 2002, pp.27-28) identity, and the 'we/they [police/public] paradox' (Perez, 1997, cited in Garcia, 2003, p.68) are central.

Internal relationships built on reliability, conformity, solidarity, membership and acceptance and difference are at the forefront of 'social' capital (relationships, power, gender), and are drawn from the *Tough-love family* D/discourse (Ryan, 2008a, pp.11-12; 2008b, pp.40-41) and *family-relationships* subculture (Ryan 2008a, pp.6-8; 2008b, pp.40-41). The discourse-practice framework and the power-knowledge relations produced and reproduced by these D/discourses and subcultures give impetus to the need for a paradigm shift, but also represent a challenging context within which to attempt such a shift.

Policing model

The model of policing is another dimension to the 'field' that gives further momentum to the *paradigm shift*. Lewis (2007, p.149) refers to Murray's (2002/2005) work and compares the 'traditional model' with the 'contemporary model' of policing. The former focuses on 'command and control' with a 'quasi-military', 'authoritarian', 'insular and defensive culture', operating as 'a craft/trade', and emphasising 'physical attributes' and strength (Lewis, 2007, p.149). In direct contrast is the contemporary model of 'community policing' with a professional, 'open and consultative culture' that values a 'democratic management style', emphasising 'problem-solving' and 'intelligence' (Lewis, 2007, p.149). Whilst the latter is proposed as an imperative, in practice, Murray (2005) questions the jurisdictions' commitment to a contemporary model. He suggests that a traditional model has been ever-present, resurfacing with legitimacy post 9/11. Features of the contemporary model support a more transformative notion of professional learning.

Police Work and Training

The underlying tension between the 'command and control' and 'community policing' models is evident in police work and police education. Historically, and to varying degrees today, police work and education operate within or are influenced by the 'functionalist paradigm' (Howe, 1987, p.47) and 'technical rationalist' (Ball, 1995, p.255) framework, or 'instrumental conception' (Fay, 1987, p.87). The functionalist orientation as 'the fixers' (Howe, 1987, pp.47-49) prefers 'order', control, regulation, 'conform[ity]', and 'practical solutions' to what are perceived as 'practical problems' (Howe, 1987, p.52).

Adding further weight to the functionalist, technical rationalist, or instrumentalist perspectives, is the influence of public administration and a 'technicist view of practice' (Kemmis, 2012, p.25). A central and fixed feature of this view is 'measurable outcomes and outputs' (Kemmis, 2012, p.25), and evaluating service delivery against 'technical, instrumental performance measures' (Kemmis, 2012, p.25). Fay (1987, p.87) describes instrumental action based on explanations of cause and effect. Hence:

... knowing the natural causes and effects of various events, agents will have a basis on which they can successfully intervene in the flow of events to bring about efficiently the results they desire. [sic] By knowing what conditions are responsible for what events, and by altering these conditions in the prescribed manner, one has the power to control them.

Habermas (1972, cited in Kemmis, 2012, p.25, emphasis in original) argues that such a focus challenges the 'moral dimension' of practice, and Kemmis (2012, p.25) warns, '[t]his is a price professional practitioners should not be prepared to pay for the 'certainties' allegedly given by [the technicist view] ... Practice is just not that simple'.

Whilst the technicist view sits comfortably with the functionalist paradigm and technical rationalist, instrumentalist frameworks, it appears to be in contrast to today's police work, which has become far more complex, wide ranging, and more intellectually demanding (Lanyon, 2007; Murray 2006; Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009; Rowe, 2008). In major part, this is due to global agendas, the diverse and complex nature of societies in the 21st century, and the need to respond to this diversity and complexity (Murray, 2006; Ransley & Mazerolle, 2009; Rowe, 2008).

The technicist and instrumentalist perspectives support the procedural, rule-based policing, and education has tended to replicate this approach. The '*micro-objectives*' of learning are emphasised – content and behaviour (Giroux, cited in McLaren 2007, p.196, emphasis in original) – and a desire for certainty is supported by a more traditional, prescriptive pedagogical approach to training (Birzer, 2003; Birzer & Tannehill, 2001; Kratcoski, 2004; McCoy, 2006; Marenin, 2004; White, 2006).

The technical rationalist framework and functionalist paradigm 'tend towards closure and reductionism' (Pearce & Maclure, 2009, p.249), generally valuing the known over unknown, right over wrong. This is at the cost of the '*macro-objectives*' of learning (Giroux, cited in McLaren 2007, p.196, emphasis in original): the higher order conceptual knowledge and skills, learning to learn, and introducing and exposing the Other. Or what Fay (1987, p.90) describes as the 'educative conception', opposite to the 'instrumental conception' (Fay, 1987, p.87). The educative conception values 'self-knowledge' and the 'capacity for self-renewal generated by reflection' (Fay, 1987, p.91).

Formulaic and prescriptive approaches to education produce 'compliance and conformity and a reliance on experts to do the thinking' (White, 2006, p.396). These are justified on the grounds of the need for skill acquisition and proficiency for specific job roles (i.e., a vocational focus), to have particular knowledge and behaviour (White, 2006). Therefore, skills in making decisions, solving problems, and thinking critically are not a key focus (White, 2006). These arguments are supported by Kratcoski's (2004) review of Australian and international police training, which found the rudimentary aspects of law enforcement predominate at the cost of the higher-order conceptual skills. This connects with the agenda amongst Australian and New Zealand police jurisdictions to professionalise

policing.

Police professional

Lanyon (2007, p.107) asserts, 'The artisan status of police is no longer appropriate and professionalization of police is now necessary to assist in meeting the current and future sophisticated demands and expectations...' There is conjecture as to the nature and scope of this agenda (Lanyon, 2007/2009), and it is reflected in a lack of clarity as to the definition of a profession and what that might mean for transforming the occupation of policing (Lanyon, 2007). In response to this agenda, a number of police jurisdictions, including the Agency, have initiated partnerships with universities to design and provide higher education pathways, as a means of moving towards professionalisation. The efficacy of these pathways in firstly integrating the vocational components of police education with higher education and secondly in augmenting police practice and functioning as a form of professional learning, is yet to be determined. A focus on higher education and qualifications in meeting the requirements of a professional status represents only one conception, and a limited conception, of such a status (Kleinig, 1996).

Return to 'paradigm shift'

Regardless of whether or not policing becomes a profession, there needs to be a commitment, beyond rhetoric and the prevailing D/discourses, to developing and maintaining professional practice through *genuine* continuous professional learning, involving a range of tools including critical thinking and reflective practice. Elias and Merriam (1995, cited in McCoy 2006, p.89) state: 'True professionals know not only what they are to do, but are also aware of the principles and the reasons for acting... The person must also be able to reflect deeply upon the experience he or she has had'. Vinzant and Crothers's (1998, cited in Marenin, 2004, p.109) description of the practice of policing provokes further thought:

police officers draw on common sense, judgment and other personal resources when analysing and acting on a situation, rather than on rules, training or supervision. The officer considers primarily 'situated exigencies'...the nature of the specific situation at hand. The officer does not rely on a predetermined plan of action because no such plan could possibly cover the variety and complexity of situations that might arise.

The *paradigm shift* requires changes in thinking and practice; a reconfiguring of notions of training, moving from technical, procedural to learning that transforms the individual and practice. However, such a move challenges police officers' 'habitus' (Bourdieu, cited in Jenkins, 2002, p.75) and their 'discourse-practice' (Cherryholmes, 1988, p.1) framework of policing: their individual and collective self-concept; their ways of seeing and doing things; their reality and what they know to be true.

Complicating this is the *family-relationships* and *command and control* subcultures that engender the perception of and ability to be capable and reliable, which necessitates the need to be or be seen to be "perfect", thereby avoiding and discouraging the admission of mistakes (Bonifacio, 1991; Neyroud & Beckley, 2001; Manning, 1978, cited in Chan, 1996; Shanahan, 2000; Waddington, 1999a/1999b). Historically, mistakes have incurred punishment. Waddington (1999b, p.301) describes the police organisation as a 'punishment-centred bureaucracy' where poor behaviour is readily noted and punished, but where good behaviour is often unacknowledged. Therefore, there has been and is a reluctance to share and/or discuss experiences and mistakes for fear of judgement and punishment, when they can translate to transforming learning and practice.

In applying the dimension of time to the notion and practice of professional learning, it is first and foremost 'cyclical' in that it represents a return to or maintenance of 'past virtues', which are seen as 'timeless virtues', necessary for both the present and the future (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.89). There is also a 'future' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.89) dimension to time: the immanent 'super event' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.89). In policing, the 'super event' is terrorism, which acts as glue keeping the traditional model of policing – 'command and control' – in place. Linear time, or

‘progressive-thinking’ (Falk, 1988, cited in Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.89), is represented in attempts to change learning, thinking and practice in response to exigencies of contemporary police work and external agendas.

The internal D/discourses, cultural elements *and* external agendas – professionalisation, changing nature of police work, public administration alongside functionalist, technical rationalist or instrumentalist perspectives – appear to *simultaneously* give reason for, or impetus to, a paradigm shift *and* resist and arrest it. The paradigm shift to professional learning within the context of the Agency offers an interesting postmodern space.

Firstly, meanings of learning expose the cinders of policing and police education (i.e., D/discourses, subcultures, traditions, models), simultaneously erasing themselves, establishing a metaphysics of presence, and arresting meaning. Secondly, processes of meaning-making seem to be caught in a paradox – technical rationalist, instrumentalist perspectives of knowledge and practice *versus* educative conceptions – whereby each one negates the other. And finally, aspects of external agendas have the potential to drive meaning-making, but also have the potential to confuse matters and arrest change, e.g., super-event of terrorism and the traditional model of policing, and professionalisation of policing.

Second reading: deconstructing the ‘paradigm shift’

If we experience life only through the filters of rigid categorizations and binary oppositions, things will definitely be business as usual (Kruger, cited by Olkowski, cited in Pearce & Maclure, 2009, p.263).

Professional learning that produces a ‘reflective professional’ (Doyle, cited in Timperley, 2011, p.8) is the form of professional learning that is slowly being introduced, but its traction is hampered by the residue of the functionalist paradigm and technical-rationalist and instrumental perspectives. The second reading aims to unsettle the first reading, to identify a different reading, one that challenges the first. I will begin the deconstruction by unpacking *paradigm shift*, initially separating the words and exploring their individual definitions and meanings.

The word ‘paradigm’ is ‘a basic set of beliefs that guide actions’ (Guba, 1990, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.13), and it reflects the combination of epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises or boundaries (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p.12). Therefore, a paradigm guides *and* determines and locates one’s thinking and actions in terms of reality, truth, and knowledge or knowing; all of which are the ingredients of modernist thought and the construction of the metaphysics of presence.

As a boundary, paradigm presents a fixed state, conveying validity, legitimacy: ‘a linear sense of development toward ‘one best way’ and ‘consensus’ approaches’ (Lather, 2006, p. 36). This conception of paradigm connects with subjectivity and notions of ‘self-construction’ versus ‘social construction’ (Hall, 2004, p.1). Hall questions how free and able individuals are to ‘create and re-create’ themselves ‘at will’ (Hall, 2004, p.1). Foucault (cited in Dick & Cassell, 2004) views subjectivity as an effect of the inflexibility of D/discourses. Or as Gagnier (1991, cited in Hall 2004, p.3) proposes, ‘the subject is also a subject of knowledge, most familiarly perhaps of the discourse of social institutions that circumscribe its terms of being...’ therefore individuals are open to the social, cultural beliefs and the power-knowledge relations of dominant D/discourses and subcultures.

Paradigm can also be a flexible concept where the boundary/ies across paradigms are elastic, moveable, and beliefs are open to influence and change. Lather (2006, pp.36-40) argues for not thinking of paradigms in silos and a linear sense, but instead to think of mapping across paradigms, creating multiple meanings and ways of knowing. This is at odds with modernist thought and ‘resurgent’ positivist agendas with nostalgia for traditional approaches to and understandings of truth, reality, and knowledge construction (Lather, 2006, pp.35-36). Adding weight to this are Hall’s (2004)

cautions of the limited scope and range of options often presented to individuals. By thinking, seeing, and acting in prescriptive ways, individuals' sense and degree of agency reflects the 'negative paradigm' – passivity and compliance – as opposed to a 'generative' agency (McNay, 2000, pp.2-5). Within the notion of 'paradigm proliferation' (Lather, 2006, p.35) with flexible, multiple ways of knowing, individuals' capacities for 'agentic action' (Billett & Pavlova, 2005, p.196), generating creativity and capacity to challenge, is needed.

'Shift' can be understood in terms of movement, motion, transition, 'change of position, or form', 'substitution' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982, p.973), or a stratagem. Whilst there is a tendency to think of movement, transition or change in a positive sense – forward, progressive, transformative – it can also be negative, backward and/or regressive. In thinking of shift as a substitution, there might be resistance to such an action. Connecting shifts or movement with learning, I refer to Atherton's (1999, p.78) notions of 'supplative' versus 'additive'. The former perceived as replacing or threatening current knowledge and practices and accompanied by resistance, and the latter augmenting knowledge and practices. Judgements are implicit in efforts to shift beliefs, thinking and practice. Therefore, existing beliefs are judged as erroneous or inappropriate, needing to be supplanted or replaced, or needing to be enhanced. Therefore, resistance to shift has the potential to reinforce and entrench current positions or beliefs.

Now putting the two words together and considering how meaning is made, *paradigm shift* implies that beliefs will shift or change, and the assumption (or hope) is that such a change will be positive and progressive. However, another perspective is seeing the *paradigm shift* as a deliberate, contrived strategy: a top-down imposed change.

Within the Agency, ownership is neither given nor widespread. Instead, efforts are needed to convince police officers of the benefits of a *paradigm shift*. As mentioned previously, some or many might perceive their habitus and capital to be under siege. Others see personal, professional, and organisational benefits of change, but express concern at the residue of resistance within pockets of the Agency.

In thinking of the *paradigm shift* as stratagem within the constraints of the field and its capital, the changes that occur could be seen as rhetorical, illusory, or an artifice. Modernist dichotomies of presence / absence, real / unreal are within artifice. Suspicion of and resistance to paradigm shift is based on a 'pervasive nostalgia' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.91) and ignorance.

Nostalgia, defined as a 'sentimental yearning' (The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982, p.691), represents modernist notions of truth, knowing, and reality. There is a desire to return to the past, or hold onto the present and what is known. Features of the *paradigm shift* – doctrinal to educative intent, technical training to professional, transformative learning, technician (doer) to professional (reflective practitioner) – create a sense of slippage from the known, and the consequent comfort and confidence, to the unknown, which is potentially confronting, and uncomfortable.

Ignorance, in modernist terms, denotes a 'lack or absence of knowledge' (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.79), and the social construction of selfhood and that 'learning is a simple one-way road from ignorance to knowledge' (Felman, 1987, cited in Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.77). Within the context of 'systematic knowledge' (Bracher, 1993, cited in Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.76, emphasis in original), described as 'totalising' and 'dominating', subjects are required and manipulated '... to act, think, and desire only in ways that function to enact, reproduce, or extend [what exists and is known]'. Its 'authority' is reliant on passive and compliant subjects (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.76).

This brings the discussion back to the technical rationalist, instrumentalist perspectives. Fay (1987, p.91) describes the 'instrumentalist conception' as dominating and 'manipulative'. In exploring knowledge and power, Fay (1987, p.89) argues that, 'oppressive and frustrating conditions exist at least partly because people are systematically ignorant about their needs and about the nature of their relationships and activities'. This highlights the importance of 'self-knowledge' as a means of freeing

and transforming individuals from oppressive and limiting thinking.

The dichotomies within the first reading that keep the notion of *paradigm shift* in the metaphysics of presence include, but are not limited to: known / unknown, stasis / movement, stability / instability, old / new, same / different, familiar / unfamiliar, present / future, past / future, past / present, equilibrium / disequilibrium, safe / unsafe, comfortable / uncomfortable. Therefore, the relationship of the two words – ‘paradigm shift’ – is mutually deconstructive in that while on the face of it ‘shift’ can be seen to unfreeze a paradigm, the unfreezing can be progressive or regressive. A paradigm, with its boundary/ies, structure of beliefs and the strength of its construction and maintenance, has the potential to freeze. The next task: to remobilise the meaning of *paradigm shift*.

Third reading: remobilising meaning

... deconstruction bends all its efforts to stretch beyond these boundaries, to transgress these confines, to interrupt and disjoin all such gathering (Caputo, 1997, p.32).

Establishing boundary/ies is fundamental to modernist thought. It represents a way of fixing and validating what ‘falls within the boundary and [what] is to be excluded’ (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.127). In thinking about *paradigm shift*, paradigm represents a boundary, a location, which explicitly establishes legitimate knowledge and ways of knowing, providing an essential point of reference. There are significant stabilisers – ‘state’, ‘inversion’, ‘progression’ (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.93, emphasis in original) – within *paradigm shift* that need to be destabilised in order to allow meaning to be remobilised.

As mentioned in the second reading, *paradigm shift* is a *state* that can be defined. *Inversion* occurs with ‘paradigm’ (beliefs) conveying certitude and conviction, the opposite of which would be non-conviction and uncertainty in what one believes. ‘Shift’ denotes movement – forwards, backwards – and the opposite would be static, stationary, or inert. In terms of *progression*, the notion of ‘paradigm shift’ suggests change, movement, and progress or transformation. However, as noted in the second reading, this is not necessarily so. It can be regressive, retrograde, or arrested and immobilised. Underlying these stabilisers are the dichotomies of stasis / movement, known / unknown, belief / non-belief, convicted / non-convicted. The opposites act as arresting forces; keeping the notion of *paradigm shift* in the metaphysics of presence.

In contrast to modernist conceptions that tend to immobilize or freeze meaning, a postmodern lens seeks ‘flux rather than freeze’ (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.93). Shurmann (1990, cited in Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.93) describes deconstruction as ‘liberat[ing] the constellations of the political (words, things, deeds) from any present referent whose rule would freeze them into constant presence’. Returning to the meaning of ‘meaning’, Stronach and Maclure (1997, p.93) assert that ‘meaning is a matter of adjacency as well as movement. It has territory ... and contested boundaries’, which can be created, lost, and recreated.

The third reading is not concerned with colonising new territory. Instead, its aim is to keep language and meaning in play, to destabilise or unfix meaning. To achieve this, the search will be ‘in the direction of indeterminacy’ (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.94), contrary to modernist notions of stability, precision, clarity, and certitude. Heeding Stronach and Maclure’s (1997, p.94) advice, I am looking for something ‘paradoxical, if not ironic’.

A number of key elements are embedded in what a paradigm shift means for professional learning within police education. These include: doctrinal to educative intent; *micro-objectives* to *macro-objectives* of learning; instrumental to educative perspectives; technician to reflective practitioner; and passive, compliant to active or generative learner. Underlying these elements is a concern for the known becoming unknown, or the certainty of the ‘closure and reductionism’ (Pearce & Maclure, 2009, p.249) of functionalist, technical rationalist, instrumentalist perspectives of policing becoming

indeterminate: unfixed, undefined, imprecise, and unclear. Words that reverberate and echo are known, unknown, certain, uncertain.

I see paradox or irony in the notion of *certain uncertainty*. These words create interdependency and a 'mutually deconstructive relationship' (Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.94) whereby meaning shifts as they 'lean' on each other.

The concept – *certain uncertainty* – is indeterminate in its non-definable *state*, and in terms of its *progression* and *inversion*. With the constituent parts up against each other, it simultaneously creates and erases itself. The deconstructive relationship is not about opposition, but rather 'a relation of differential intrication in which the involvement of terms with each other constitutes their only identity or quidity' (Tresize, 1993, cited in Stronach & Maclure, 1997, p.94). Or a relation that puts it under erasure ('*sous rature*'). Derrida applied his concept of '*sous rature*' to 'words and concepts ... that are representations of the play of differences between ideas, not essentialist representations of reality' (Rambo-Ronai, 1999, p.116).

Certain uncertainty creates movement within and across learning from experience and learning to learn as they contribute to police officers' professional learning and development. But professional learning is outside or beyond the boundaries of police officers' understanding and experience of policing, education and the power-knowledge relations of the D/discourses and subcultures.

Burbules's (1997, p.106) notion of 'difference beyond' refers to difference that engenders a sense of 'foreignness' and 'strangeness' and, consequently, other ways of thinking and acting are imperceptible. Hence, suspicion of artifice and resistance to professional learning based on nostalgia and ignorance. This reading is about permitting the play of meanings. By opening up the key elements of professional learning, inviting the Other in, as opposed to keeping it outside, on the margins or beyond: to counter the notions of 'difference beyond', ignorance and nostalgia.

An element to begin the play is the reflective practitioner. Professional learning is concerned with practitioners learning to learn by reflecting on experience in order to improve their practice. Reflective practitioners, as opposed to technicians, operate from a generative agentic position. They seek and value self-knowledge over prescriptive, technical knowledge, and are better equipped to deal with new and unfamiliar situations, the unknown and subsequent uncertainty. Supporting the development of self-knowledge is the move to an educative intent – the *macro-objectives* of learning – rather than doctrinal intent (*micro-objectives*). A focus on higher-order conceptual knowledge and skills with tools to enable critical thinking and reflection encourage curiosity, innovation, and nourish intrinsic motivators. This is in direct contrast to the manipulative, dominant, constrained and procedural thinking generated by the functionalist, technical rationalist, instrumentalist perspectives, and the external motivators of promotion, reputation, power and authority.

Nostalgia represents cyclical time, holding onto the past, what is known, and not looking to the future: remaining inert. But in policing as in so many occupations and disciplines, change, often driven by significant external agendas, is happening at a rapid rate, and cannot be avoided. In attempting to bring movement to the notion of nostalgia, the past contains invaluable lessons that, in adopting a reflective stance, past mistakes and lessons provide insights to enhance current thinking and practice. Again, a practitioner with a positive self-concept and self-knowledge is more likely to critique the past and learn from it and the experiences provided.

In attempting to move the meaning of ignorance from a negative and somewhat inert state, I am reminded of Barbara Johnson's (1987, p.16) sage advice to see ignorance rather than knowledge as an imperative:

Ignorance, far more than knowledge, is what can never be taken for granted. If I perceive my ignorance as a gap in knowledge instead of an imperative that changes the very nature of what I think I know, then I do not truly experience my ignorance. The surprise of otherness is that

moment when a new form of ignorance is suddenly activated as an imperative.

This brings different meaning to the conception of ignorance, and the play between ignorance and knowledge, of not knowing and knowing. Ignorance, within the context of an artisan or technician subjected to 'systematic knowledge' (Bracher 1993, cited in Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.76), is a consequence of being a passive and compliant subject, and an excuse to avoid changing thinking and practice. However, to a reflective practitioner or professional it is an opportunity, something of which to be aware and to embrace because knowing what you do not know is important.

As the component parts of the concept of *certain uncertainty* 'lean' on each other, they generate movement and unfix meaning around the notions of professional learning and development, professional practitioner, nostalgia, and ignorance. They expose the Other, different conceptions of subjectivity and agency: subjectivity that is self-constructed not socially-constructed and a generative rather than a negative agency.

Conclusion

The notion of *paradigm shift* in the first reading was influenced by dominant functional, technical and instrumental perspectives, and D/discourses and subcultures that arrested its meaning within the metaphysics of presence. A different reading deconstructing the first found that suspicion of artifice, nostalgia, and ignorance were complicitous formations, loitering in the modernist landscape, and resisting a paradigm shift.

Applying the concept of *certain uncertainty* to the third reading remobilised and transformed the meanings of nostalgia and ignorance and suspicion of and resistance to professional learning, seeing them as opportunities rather than constraints. To think of professional learning and development through the lens of intrinsic motivators – developing self-awareness and identity, autonomy, and focus on others and improved practice – as opposed to extrinsic motivators of power, authority, reputation, and promotion. Alongside this, eschewing the constraints of nostalgia and instead seeing the past as a building block of the future, learning from past experiences and mistakes. Within such a context, the meaning of ignorance becomes an imperative for the reflective, agentic practitioner's learning rather than an absence of knowledge or excuse for ineffective practice.

As a novice deconstructive reader, writing this paper and attempting such a reading of the concept of professional learning and development within police education has exposed me to new and different insights to data from my thesis and what I experience on a daily basis as an outsider-insider in the Agency. It has inspired me to think differently about how I structure and write my thesis, to avoid freezing or arresting concepts in the metaphysics of presence. I hope that it has awakened readers' interest in a similar endeavour.

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